



Promoting Youth Civic Engagement

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Cover photo: PYCE Peer Network Members lead the Community Engagement (CE) Workshop for aspiring Peer Network Members and local youth at Aden Model High School. The Workshop targeted youth from Mansourah, a key expansion district for PYCE in Aden.

Promoting Youth Civic Engagement (PYCE) Program Summary

The PYCE project is designed to support USAID's objective of increasing Yemen's stability through targeted interventions in vulnerable areas by (1) improving community-based institutions and mechanisms to ensure active participation in governance and locally driven solutions strengthened; and (2) improving access to and the delivery of quality services.

To support this USAID objective, the PYCE project objectives have sought: to strengthen the role of moderate religious actors in positively influencing Yemeni youth, and to establish and support youth sports and recreational programs. In response to changes in Yemen's political and socio-economic context, which has been influenced recently by the Arab Spring that led to the Yemeni Revolution, a new Transitional Government, and an ongoing process of national reconciliation and priority-setting known as the National Dialogue, the language of these objectives has been enhanced. These objectives have been expanded to foster a more diverse set of program components that can accomplish the overarching objectives of USAID in a new Yemen. The enhanced objectives are: 1) strengthen and increase interaction between youth and influential community actors, including moderate religious actors; and 2) empower youth to positively affect their local communities through sports, recreational programs, and other community-based engagement activities.

AMIDEAST and its partners Peace Players International (PPI) and the National Organization for the Development of Society (NODS), in cooperation with the Ministries of Youth and Sports (MoYS), Endowments and Guidance (MoEG) and Education (MoE), have adopted a technical approach to accomplish these objectives that support strengthening youth participation in their communities via civic engagement. In conjunction with community stakeholders and mentors known as Steering Committee (SC) Members the PYCE Program has trained more than 350 male and female youth between the ages of 18-32 in the principles and methods of civic engagement. PYCE leadership and development training has included the Community Engagement (CE) Workshop, Training of Trainers (TOT) Program and Sports and Activity Coordinator (SAC) Program, along with ongoing monitoring and experiential learning opportunities. These activities advance skills in peer-facilitation, community needs assessment, program development, formation of community teams and leagues, evaluation of participant learning and gathering long-term support for community programs. These youth, known as Peer Network (PN) members, are expected to identify and train other youth, thereby increasing the impact of the PYCE Program and promoting the sustainability of youth-led and youth-centered activities after the program ends.

Peer Network Activities

Peer Network events are implemented as Community Grants and encompass awareness, sports and recreational and community service activities. Awareness sessions are developed to provide life and vocational skills training, as well as personal and character development. Peer Network sport activities are based on the sport-for-development model, which utilizes sport, physical activity and play to achieve development goals in sectors such as education and health.

Community service activities will be performed to augment PYCE solar system renovations and upgrades, such as repairs to windows and doors, cleaning and painting, planting gardens and

removing debris. The solar systems, in turn, power lights and fans, which prevent otherwise frequent disruptions of activities when power outages occur, thereby enabling the Peer Network to extend activities into the evenings, where youth can become positively engaged. Solar system renovations reduce operational costs for youth centers, promote natural resource conservation and serve as an educational tool that supports science and technology curricula. These events directly improve the capacity of youth centers and address critical needs. They are implemented at PYCE-supported youth centers and their affiliated spaces and can be held in conjunction with local charities to maximize awareness and outreach efforts. Youth centers are supported by Peer Network Activity Council (PNAC) members, who play a key role in maintaining solar systems, organizing and promoting youth activities and liaising with ministry officials, moderate religious actors and business leaders to facilitate continuous community buy-in and support. As their activities and involvement increases, Peer Network members can internalize their role as youth leaders and become more confident in their ability to promote positive behaviors, increase access to and quality of services and contribute to the development of locally driven solutions. They can also re-imagine their neighborhoods as thriving and unified spaces, where they can contribute to a more stable and democratic society.

Achievements

With strong community support, PYCE has continued activities in the governorates of Aden, Sana'a and Lahej. PYCE has expanded its activities in the Adeni district of Mansourah and in the governorate of Abyan. Despite the fluid security environment and ongoing social and economic challenges across the country, PYCE has met or exceeded all except 1 program target from the period October 2010 to September 2013. PYCE has made rapid progress and expects the remaining target to be reached by May 2014. PYCE has also made significant strides toward FY 2014 targets. The following tables illustrate the achievements of program objectives.

Intermediate Result 1: Strengthen and increase interaction between youth and influential community actors, including moderate religious actors

Activities	Former Target	FY 2014 Target	Achievement this quarter	Total for Project
Number of community actors engaged in governorate level meetings	250	100	177	1,376
Number of Steering Committee Meetings	25	10	4	63
Number of meetings for PYCE participants at youth centers	27	10	12	56
Number of Community Grants awarded to Peer Network Members	18	10	16	56

Intermediate Result 2: Empower youth to positively affect their local communities through sports, recreational programs and other community-based engagement activities

Activities	Former Target	FY 2014 Target	Achievement this quarter	Total for Project
Number of youth centers renovated	11	2	1	13
Number of PACA informed teamwork activities completed	50	16	13	101
Number of youth trained as coaches (SAC Program)	50	30	29	107
Number of activated and involved teams that work with PYCE	16	3	1	70
Number of youth trained in peer facilitation (TOT Program)	48	28	0	92
Number of participants trained by Peer Network Members	1,350	300	588	5,465
Number of channels of communication by Peer Network Members	90	0	38	74

Major accomplishments this quarter included the selection and leadership preparation of more than 100 new Peer Network Members, bringing the total number to more than 350! PN Members have internalized their position as role models and active citizens. In Aden, PN Members recently held meetings with their Local Council Members and are in the process of planning joint interventions for youth in their communities. They are eager to contribute to the youth agenda and overall development of a more participatory system of governance. Indeed PN Members are becoming thought leaders on youth issues and are promoting the acceptance of youth voice among the electorate.

PYCE has also increased the capacity of local institutions, via major renovations and upgrades at youth centers. With successful outreach and collaboration with local initiatives EVO and RAINS, PYCE PN Members installed a rainwater harvesting system at MoYS Azal Club in Sana'a. This system was installed alongside a recent PYCE solar system upgrade, which increased the capacity of the Club to conduct youth-centered activities in power outages and in the evening, as well as supply water to the outer courtyard. Moreover, PYCE removed the solar batteries which powered outdoor lights at MoYS Gelah Club in Aden. The batteries were replaced with a new solar system, which powers both the outdoor courtyard and clubhouse. The previous batteries will be donated to a youth center in Lahej. Ceremonies to inaugurate the solar systems at Gelah and Azal Club were held with representatives of USAID, national, governorate and local Yemeni ministers and a wide range of community and religious actors. In Abyan, a key expansion area, PYCE supported a solar system renovation at MoYS Khanfer Club.



Four meetings with Steering Committee Members were conducted this quarter and more than 1,300 community and religious actors were engaged. Twelve meetings of PYCE

participants were also conducted. Graduates of the CE Workshop implemented 13 PACA activities and 29 new PN Members participated in the Sport and Activity Coordinator (SAC) Program. The Training of Trainers (TOT) program in peer facilitation was not scheduled this quarter; however, PYCE will implement the training in the next quarter.

Figure 2: A student at MoE Aden Model High School plays on courts recently cleaned and painted by PYCE participants.

PN Members implemented 16 Community Grants and other events, which included the training of nearly 600 at-risk youth. One team was activated this quarter. PYCE also expects to launch new teams in the coming weeks in expansion areas, where new Peer Network members were recently selected. PN members utilized 38 channels of communication to disseminate information about their activities.

PYCE has successfully promoted the designation of female-only spaces and increased activities for women and girls at youth centers. These accomplishments stimulated an increase in the number of female youth participants. Moreover, youth centers such as MoYS Azal Club will be working in conjunction with PN Members to implement activities for women and girls for the first time.

PYCE is committed to the development of female youth leaders. Approximately 40% of all PNAC and PN Members are female. Out of 5,000 youth trained, approximately 50% were female. Female PN Members helped conduct the CE Workshop and SAC Program in expansion areas. In addition, they planned and implemented community-based programs centered upon preparation for higher education and understanding the importance of volunteerism. While centers for sport and recreation for women are limited, these activities demonstrate PYCE success in the promotion of female-only spaces at youth clubs and K-12 female schools.

PYCE has also continued to promote sports and recreational activities through the sports-for-development model. Soccer, basketball, volleyball and other games have been enjoyed through

competitions and events in conjunction with clean-ups, greening activities and art projects. Most notably, PN Members implemented a PYCE Community Grant to paint positive messages which link sports, teamwork and life skills at MoYS Entalak Club in Lahej. The messages replaced graffiti and dramatically improved the appearance of the Club.

With support from PYCE Community Grants, PN members continued ongoing efforts to promote safety, health and wellness, through a series of workshops and training sessions. In particular, Peer Network members conducted these activities in cooperation with health professionals from the Health and Relief Foundation, a local organization and with PYCE-supported youth centers such as the University of Aden. More than 20 workshops have been conducted in addition to other interventions such as site visits, installing fire extinguishers at 12 youth centers and providing youth centers and K-12 schools with first aid kits. In Sana'a, training sessions were also combined with the distribution of more than 200 school bags to underserved female and male primary and secondary school students. When combined with solar system installations, PYCE interventions reduce operational expenses, increase the capacity of youth centers to address the needs of at-risk youth, safeguard equipment and both prevent and respond to emergencies.



Figure 3: A female student receives a new school bag at MoE Mohammed Mutahar Zaid School for Females in Sana'a. The school bags were distributed as part of a PYCE Community Grant to support safer K-12 schools and neighborhoods.

Challenges and Opportunities

Ongoing crises in terms of the political, social and economic status of Yemenis influenced the pace with which activities could be implemented. Protests, roadblocks and acts of civil disobedience at times caused activities to be rescheduled. In addition, PYCE had hoped to expand its activities at MoYS Rawda Club and MoE 14 October School for females, both in Aden. Another international organization has followed up and provided a stage to the school, and PYCE will seek to encourage drama and different activities to utilize the new stage. However, management turnover at these sites has caused activities to be delayed and progress in this intervention could not be made. PYCE has engaged both the MoYS and MoE, as well as newly appointed staff at these youth centers, in order to resume activities next quarter. Moreover, a security outpost adjacent to MoYS Mina Club in Aden extended their checkpoint outward toward the entrance to the Club. While the Club has remained open to the public, the expanded checkpoint discouraged some local residents from participating in activities. The Club is also

experiencing changes in personnel, which has constrained the process of dialogue on this issue. Yet, one of PYCE's Peer Network Members, has become an instrumental figure at the Club and is actively maintaining the solar system. Along with other PN Members, he is currently coordinating activities to be held at or near the Club and/or its affiliated spaces and has been appointed interim vice president of the club.

PYCE concluded its activities in Marib. PYCE had hoped to conduct closeout celebrations with PN Members, however, these areas have experienced frequent disruptions in power, ongoing political insecurity and attacks on both foreign staff/expatriates as well as employees of non-governmental organizations. Certificates to honor the PN Members' contributions will be distributed via informal meetings with PYCE Team Members. Despite these challenges, in addition to the aforementioned accomplishments, the following noteworthy gains have also been made:

- Successful expansion of Peer Network and Steering Committee in Aden districts and in the governorate of Abyan
- Natural resource conservation and greening activities
- PNAC elections
- Life skills and vocational skills promotion
- Widespread coverage of activities through *14 October Newspaper*, *Aden Al Ghad*, *Today's News*, *Aden TV*, *Yemeni Sport*, Facebook, WhatsApp, and other communication channels
- Designated study areas and libraries at youth centers and K-12 schools to counter learning declines and support dropout prevention activities

Figure 4 (below): PYCE Peer Network Members and coaches celebrate a successful Sport and Activity Coordinator (SAC) Program at MoYS Alwani Stadium of Mansourah Club in Mansourah, an expansion district in Aden for PYCE activities.



Upcoming Activities

PYCE is supporting additional Community Grants and will continue to increase the capacity of youth centers with solar system installations and structural enhancements. PYCE previously supported a solar system renovation

upgrade to power the outdoor lights along the courtyard and indoor lights for the clubhouse at MoYS Gelah Club in Aden. PYCE is now in the process of renovating the multi-purpose play area and entrance to encourage basketball and handball competitions and constructing a playground for young children. These upgrades are scheduled for completion in late May 2014. These and other PYCE upgrades will promote youth centers as safe spaces where youth can feel connected – an important contribution which has been increasingly recognized among residents in Yemeni neighborhoods. The PN is embracing these accomplishments and has begun to strengthen partnerships with local government entities and local organizations, participate in broadcasts and media events, and increase educational activities. Upcoming activities include:

- Workshops on safety, emergency preparedness and first aid
- Coordination between Peer Network Members and the Aden Local Council
- Workshops on soil cultivation, desertification and greening
- PACA activities in expansion areas
- Sport and Activity Coordinator (SAC) Program for new PN Members
- Training of Trainers (TOT) Program
- Install gardens and green spaces at youth centers and K-12 schools
- Establish PNAC and other team-based activities in expansion areas
- Regular PN and SC Member meetings at youth centers